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SUBJECT: Somalia Prime Minister Briefs Ambassador and Special Envoy

Classified by PolOff Mitch Benedict for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

Summary

¶1. (C) Somalia Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein briefed the Ambassador and Special Envoy on preparations for direct talks with the opposition in Djibouti, current security and governance concerns and challenges, and ongoing efforts at reconciliation. End Summary.

A Grilling by Parliament

¶2. (C) Somalia Prime Minister Hussein called on the Ambassador and Special Envoy on May 4 soon after his arrival in Nairobi. He had come from Baidoa, where he had just spent three days trying to mollify Parliament. He described Parliament as tough and demanding -- they wanted to know what he is doing to improve security, to further reconciliation, and mostly, to get them paid. European supported salaries are currently \$1,200 a month for each sitting MP, down from a previous high of \$2,000, and MPs "are expecting more." Despite some "spoilers," said the PM, he was confident the MPs were supportive of his reconciliation efforts in Mogadishu, the TFG's participation in the upcoming SRSG-facilitated talks with the opposition in Djibouti, and the TFG's actions to enhance security.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador told the PM he had spoken May 2 with the Speaker of Parliament Sheikh Aden Mohamed Nur "Madobe." Aware that the Speaker, as acting President in the absence of President Yusuf, previously has taken a hard "security first" stance with the PM and backed the narrow self interests of Parliament (i.e. pay), the Ambassador told the Speaker the United States expects nothing less than full support for the Prime Minister. In particular, the Ambassador urged Madobe to support the Prime Minister and President's reconciliation plans, including the upcoming talks in Djibouti as facilitated by SRSG Ould-Abdallah. The Speaker told us he stood squarely behind the PM. Told of the conversation the PM thanked the Ambassador and said the call clearly had moderated Madobe.

TFG Djibouti Delegation

¶4. (C) The PM has been in frequent touch with the President, who is now in Paris, on the composition of the TFG delegation to Ould-Abdallah's talks in Djibouti. He is also negotiating over delegates with the Speaker of Parliament. The TFG list will contain seven delegates plus two alternates. The PM intends to include three to four ministers, including constitutional affairs and reconciliation, with the remaining delegates coming from Parliament. The primary point of contention, according to the PM, is Deputy Prime Minister Ahmed Abdisalam Adan.

¶5. (C) Ahmed Abdisalam, the former Director of HornAfrik media, is a

prominent and well-regarded member of the Hawiye/Haber Gedir/Ayr community. He has been instrumental in bridging the divide between the TFG and the internal Hawiye opposition, particularly with the Haber Gedir/Ayr, and in gaining the TFG some much needed breathing room in Mogadishu. The Bakara market agreement was largely his doing. The PM supports Ahmed Abdisalam's inclusion in the TFG delegation as a means to keep the Ayr on board.

¶6. (C) However, the President and the security hardliners take a decidedly different view. Simply put, the President views the Ayr collectively as terrorists and the root of all opposition, and HornAfrik media as their voice. The President strongly opposed Ahmed Abdisalam's appointment to the cabinet, and he does not want Ahmed Abdisalam on the TFG delegation. The PM wants to accommodate the President's wishes, and he asked for our help in conveying his predicament to Ahmed Abdisalam, who is a frequent interlocutor of Post. We agreed to do so.

PM Congratulates CT Success

¶7. (C) The PM congratulated the U.S. on the recent "Dusa Mareb operation" to eliminate Aden Hashi Ayrow. Ayrow's elimination will make it easier to get the opposition on board, said the PM. Ayrow was feared by his own people, the Hawiye/Haber Gedir/Ayr, and the PM said his death was "a liberation" for the Ayr. While they may not express it, according to the PM, Ayr businessmen and sub-clan members, as well as most Haber Gedir, are pleased a person who has brought such fear to the community has been removed. Ayrow, and the Shabaab, had clearly targeted DPM Ahmed Abdisalam because of his efforts to bring the Ayr and TFG together, and Ayrow's elimination

NAIROBI 00001183 002 OF 003

should decrease the threat to Ahmed Abdisalam, and thereby contribute toward maintaining the integrity of the TFG.

Security Remains a Problem

¶8. (C) While the people of Mogadishu are tired and eager for a positive outcome from the upcoming talks with the opposition in Djibouti, according to the PM, "the opposition groups, especially the Islamic Courts," are focusing on hit and run operations. They capture a town briefly, speak on the radio, and then run. They are not capable of capturing and holding a town, but instead are trying to demonstrate strength so as to gain support and "be someone" in the reconciliation talks.

¶9. (C) The PM said the heavy fighting in Mogadishu over the weekend of April 20-21, which included the Ethiopian raid on the al-Hidaya mosque, resulted in the deaths of 55-60 Shabaab fighters and a large number of wounded. The Shabaab engaged in the fighting were primarily Ogadenis and Marehan, sub-clans of the Darood, who were trained by al-Turki. The Shabaab force, while large in number, came from Lower Juba region, to which they returned with the wounded. There was no local community participation, and no clan participation from Mogadishu in the fighting, said the PM.

¶10. (C) The Ambassador, noting that Sheikh Sharif and the ARS delegation told us they have no link to the Shabaab and oppose violence, asked the PM if he believed that forces of the Islamic Courts and the Shabaab were fighting together and/or both separately behind the fighting in Mogadishu. The PM said "not many" Islamic Courts' militia were involved in the recent fighting. However, he added that when you hear and read the views of Sheikh Sharif he is "100 percent" supporting the armed opposition. When the PM last met with elders of the Hawiye they told him Sheikh Sharif should apologize for his support voiced for the armed opposition. Consequently, while "there is some connection, some support," said the PM, they are not the same because the Shabaab opposes all talks, and the ARS and Sheikh Sharif are eager to engage in dialogue.

Eritrea

¶11. (C) The PM alleged that Eritrea wants neither reconciliation nor talks, and they are "blindly supporting the Shabaab and al Qaeda." SRSO Ould-Abdallah has been thwarted by the Eritreans in his efforts to reach out to the ARS, and Sheikh Sharif is tightly under the control of Asmara, the PM told us. The elimination of Ayrow should help members of the Islamic Courts to distance themselves from the Shabaab if they so wish. The PM claimed that now only Eritrea is supporting the Shabaab, primarily with arms and less so with money.

Piracy

¶12. (C) Just returned from his trip to the UN Security Council, Washington, and Oslo for the International Contact Group, Special Envoy briefed the PM on his meetings. He specially mentioned our efforts to support a UNSC resolution on piracy. The recent French and Spanish cases have highlighted the need for urgent action to combat the increasingly dangerous seas off of Somalia. In a humorous aside the PM relayed to us a conversation he had with Puntland President Adde Muse in backed off with a "No, No" when asked if he would take custody of the pirates responsible for attacking the French vessel. The PM said piracy is "destroying and destabilizing Somalia." He strongly backed UN action and he will work with the U.S. in support of a resolution.

Saudi Arabia: Money and Influence

¶13. (C) When the PM was last in Saudi Arabia he was told the Saudis wished to host the concluding meeting of the upcoming ARS/TFG talks that will commence in Djibouti. (Comment: SRSO Ould-Abdallah has told us the same, and he has no objection. End Comment) In addition, the PM was told the Saudis were engaging the Eritreans to try and turn them around on Somalia in support of reconciliation and the TFG. The Special Envoy confirmed our understanding too that the Saudis were trying to help contain Eritrea's negative interventions in Somalia.

¶14. (C) The Saudi's promised to support the PM politically, and to help the TFG financially. However, they refused to release any of the additional funds from the \$189 million package they allegedly agreed earlier to provide President Yusuf. The much-rumored

NAIROBI 00001183 003 OF 003

disappearance of the \$32 million the Saudis provided to PM Gedi around the time of the National Reconciliation Conference in 2007 has dampened their enthusiasm for providing cash to the Somalis. The PM asked for \$24 million and the Saudis replied positively, but asked for a specific project request. The PM informed the President, and planned to see the Saudi Ambassador in Nairobi to advance a request. "They are unhappy about the past," said the PM, "but they will support an urgent request from the TFG."

Urgent Financial Support Needed

¶15. (C) Again the PM pleaded that urgent financial support is needed by the TFG -- to move forward on reconciliation, to implement transitional tasks, to provide basic services, to pay government salaries, and to establish professional security services. He said the TFG has identified weaknesses in the security services, and is aware that clan militia in under the guise of "security operations" have been involved in looting and contributing to insecurity. His government is committed to turning around the disorganized security forces, establish a unified command, rid the forces of bad elements, train and screen recruits, and professionalize the security services. However, all this takes money. The Special Envoy noted that only the U.S. and Sweden have made money available immediately for the UNDP-managed start up package of support to the TFG. The Ambassador and Special Envoy assured the PM we would do to expedite U.S. assistance, and we urged the PM to press the Europeans equally for

release of funding.

16.(C) The TFG has started paying security forces \$100 a month, and providing \$50 a month for food and daily maintenance. In the short term the funding is coming from revenues generated by the port, but that source is neither sufficient nor can it be maintained. The TFG also has started to recruit 5,000 for the security forces, from all regions, who will be trained in Ethiopia. However, for their recruitment and transport to Ethiopia the TFG will need \$400,000-500,000. Recently the President sent fellow sub-clan members Generals Morgan and Darawish to Oman for support. Darawish reportedly came back with a check for \$3.5 million, said the PM, and he asked to speak with Darawish about it. Parliament asked the PM about the Omani money, and the PM had hoped some of those funds could be used for the security sector, but he has yet to see any evidence the money is in "government channels."

Comment

17. (C) Although he admitted to being under pressure in his relationship with President Yusuf, the PM was clearly much less tense than last time we saw him a month ago when he openly questioned his ability to continue working with the President.
RANNEBERGER